

Sunday 'Spiritual Communion' on Palm Sunday

*You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place. Today you are invited also to place a Palm Cross in front of you for use in the service. The words in **bold** you are encouraged to say out loud as worship and prayer.*

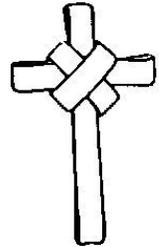
Opening Prayer

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members.

We are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.

Opening Sentences Reminding us we are on Our Lenten Journey

Hosanna to the Son of David, the King of Israel.
Blessed is He who Comes in the name of the Lord
Hosanna in the highest



Prayers of Preparation and Confession

Almighty God to whom all hearts are open,all desires known,and from whom no secrets are hidden:cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,that we may perfectly love you,and worthily magnify your holy name;through Christ our Lord. Amen

Reflect on the week and on your relationships.

- What good things have come from God this week?
- Where have I fallen short?
- What might I do tomorrow?

You may wish to pray

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

You have received a Palm Cross which has already been blessed in church earlier this week. With all our other church members you have received this sacramental sign which will serve as a reminder of God's promise of eternal life throughout the year. So you are invited to hold your cross aloft and pray:

God our Saviour, whose Son Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem as Messiah to suffer and to die; let these palms be for us signs of his victory and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our King, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; Amen.



A reading from the Gospel

Read Matthew 21 v 1-11 (A reflection attached to the end of the service sheet)

Intercessions

Let us pray for the needs of the world, for our local community, and for those close to you.

End with the Lord's Prayer. **Our Father...**

Let us give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us now and in the week ahead.

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally in the bread and wine,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.

**O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.**

God of our salvation, we give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who came in your name and turned the lonely way of rejection and death into triumph.
Grant us the steadfast faith, to enter the gates of righteousness,
that we may receive grace to become worthy citizens of your holy realm. Amen

**Lord, let your yearning for the salvation of all nations
move us beyond our narrow nationalisms of me and mine,**

Blessing and Peace

May the Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

The Peace of the Lord be always with you



Reflection on Matthew 21 The Triumphal Entry

It is the start of a week of suffering for Jesus. Yet the week starts with 'Hallelujahs'. A crowd of Israelite men, women and children with expectations of freedom. Long oppressed and lamenting the loss of their national liberty. The people of Jerusalem gather in defiance of the Roman authorities and welcome the One on whom their hopes and dreams of a better future rest. Waving the Palm branch which was the symbol of the Jewish nation, like the flag of their country at a time before flags, the crowd make way for the Jewish Messiah. The Messiah who had grown up in Nazareth, had wandered the deserts and towns of Israel, making people well, teaching people truth, setting people free. And now the time had come for His coronation in Jerusalem. The final liberation of the Israelite people.

How often do we look to God for salvation on our own terms? How often do **we** decide what it is **we** need saving from? How often do we wave the symbols of our own lives as if to catch God's attention or remind Jesus of our own needs? The story of the crowd in Jerusalem reminds us of how short sighted our own vision is. How briefly our own hopes and dreams appear and disappear in the face of a changing world. Within days the crowd is shouting 'Crucify Him' for He is not the King of the Jews but a blasphemer and criminal. What changed?

The truth is that God's salvation is far bigger and broader and deeper than the salvation we seek in our own lives. To the Israelites Jesus came with a challenge. Do not seek your national salvation but rather the salvation of the entire world .. including the Roman Empire, the Samaritans, the Gentiles of all creeds and races. Your hopes and dreams are too narrow, too small, too comfortable for our Father in Heaven. Jesus opens wide His arms on the cross and embraces the entire human race.

We face a time of great need in our world there is no doubt. But let our hopes for Christ's saving grace be extended beyond our own health and happiness. Let our prayers be offered beyond our own community and nation. Let us acknowledge that there are those whose experience of this Coronavirus will be far more painful than our own. Those who live in Gaza where around 2 million men women and children live within around 150 square miles with little or no access to medical provision. Those 6.5 million people who are displaced in their own nation of Syria with little or no access to sanitised water or medical care. The 57% of 7.4 million refugees from Africa who are children and are reliant upon adult care and provision. Might our prayers for salvation and freedom be too narrow much of the time?

On this day when we celebrate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, as an act of salvation, let us give thanks that this saving act was broader and wider and deeper than we would ever have imagined or asked for. The crowds did not understand that the vision of eternal freedom that Jesus had for the world was far brighter than the vision they had for national sovereignty. Jesus came to fulfil the prophecy of Simeon in his song in the temple ' For mine eyes have seen : thy salvation; which thou hast prepared : before the face of all people; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles :and to be the glory of thy people Israel'

The salvation of God from this health crisis must be far deeper and wider than we at first pray for. Let us put down our narrow nationalism and our self-focus and let us through this time of trouble allow ourselves to see that the world needs Jesus in a far more profound way than we often acknowledge.

